II. Remarks

Claims 1, 8, 30, 52, and 55 are being amended and claims 4 and 5 are being cancelled. Accordingly, after entering this amendment, claims 1-3, 6-26, 30-48, 52, 53, 55, and 57-59 remain pending, of which claims 1, 8, 30, 52, and 55 are the independent claims.

As recited in amended claims 1, 8, 30, 52, and 55, the claimed invention is directed at methods and apparatuses for controlling or managing different types of occupant restraints in a motor vehicle in a particular sequence. Specifically, various embodiments all require, once one or more of the occupant restraints are enabled, activating an automatic locking restraint of a seat belt, activating a pre-tensioner of the seat belt after the activation of the automatic locking restraint, and activating an air bag after the activation of the pre-tensioner.

Activating the occupant restraints in the sequence required by amended claims 1, 8, 30, 52, and 55 offers certain advantages. In particular, activating the automatic locking restraint before activating the pre-tensioner and the air bag prevents slackening of the belt and the undesired spooling of the belt before the pre-tensioner and the air bag actuates as found in conventional occupant restraint systems.

Reconsideration and re-examination of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 4, 5, 8-26, 30-48, 52, 53, and 57-59 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In response, claims 4 and 5 have been cancelled, claims 8 and 30 have been amended to delete the recitation "or disabling," and claim 52 has been amended to delete the recitation "or disable."

Accordingly, it is believed that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112 are now moot and should be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 3, 6, 7, and 55 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,742,886 to C rrion et al. or over U.S. Patent No. 5,346,152 to Fohl in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,338,063 to Takeuchi et al. Claims 2, 4, and 5 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Corrion in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,552,986 to Omura et al. or over Fohl in view of Takeuchi and in further view of Omura.

Claims 8-16, 25, 26, 30-38, 47, 48, 52, and 57-59 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,341,252 to Foo et al. in view of Corrion. Claims 17 and 39 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Foo in view of Corrion and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,203,059 to Mazur et al. Claims 18-24, 40-46, and 53 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Foo in view of Corrion and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,467,804 to Saka et al.

Turning first to Corrion in regard to independent claims 1 and 55, that reference discusses a method of controlling the activation of occupant restraints in a motor vehicle for a high-g event. However, as the Examiner concedes, Corrion does not state the order of the deployment of the occupant restraints. Indeed, Corrion fails to appreciate the advantages of preventing the slackening of the belt and the undesired spooling out of the belt by activating the automatic locking restraint before activating the pre-tensioner and then the airbag. Absent an appreciation of these advantages, there is no suggestion of activating an automatic locking restraint, activating a pre-tensioner after activating the automatic restraint, and activating an air bag after activating the pre-tensioer, as required by amended claims 1 and 55. Accordingly, Corrion cannot render the invention, as claimed in amended claims 1 and 55, as obvious.

Fohl discusses activating a locking restraint and a pre-tensioner, and Takeuchi discusses activating a pre-tensioner and an air bag. However, neither suggests the

advantages of activating a l cking restraint before activating a pre-tensioner and an air bag, and therefore there is no motivation to combin th references. Since there is no suggestion to th desirability of the combination of Fohl with Takeuchi, Fohl and Takeuchi cannot render the claims of the present applicati n as obvious.

Accordingly, reconsideration of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) and allowance of claims 1 and 55 are respectfully requested.

As for independent claims 8, 30, and 52, Foo discusses a method of managing the occupant restraints in a vehicle, but, as the Examiner acknowledges, fails to describe the sequence of activating the automatic locking restraint, the pretensioner, and the airbag and fails to appreciate the advantages of activating the occupant restraints in a particular sequence. Moreover, since Corrion does not cure these deficiencies for at least the reasons discussed above, there is no motivation to combine Foo with Corrion. Accordingly, Foo alone or in combination with Corrion does not render Applicant's invention, as claimed in claims 8, 30, and 52, as obvious, and therefore reconsideration of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) and allowance of claims 8, 30, and 52 are respectfully requested

Since claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9-26, 31-48, 53, and 57-59 depend from claims 1, 8, 30, 52, or 55, directly or indirectly, the reasons for allowance of claims 1, 8, 30, 52, and 55 apply as well to the dependent claims. Claims 4 and 5 have been cancelled and therefore the rejection of these claims are now moot.

III. Conclusion

In view of the preceding remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the pending claims (Claims 1-3, 6-26, 30-48, 52, 53, 55, and 57-59) are in condition for allowance. Such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date

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